Seddiqin Argument for Proving the Existence of God in Islamic Philosophy

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1-Preface:

This research is about a controversial discussion in philosophy of religion, which is "Is there any rational argument for proving the existence of God that can provide a confident result for reason?" There are many answers to this question that have occupied a major part of traditional and modern philosophies. In the history of Islamic philosophy, there are many answers to this question. One of the most notable answers is the argument that is called "Seddiqin Argument." This argument has some advantages over other arguments. Islamic philosophers have found it a very honorably rational and actual way to God and made them to pose new aspects of it. The most famous argument has been proposed by Sadr al-Din Shirazi (980/1572-1050/1640) who is called also "Mulla Sadra". He posed his argument and its foundations in details in his book "*Al-Asfar*". There are some difficulties in understanding his argument and its foundations, which are, scattered in this book and his other books. This argument is posed in the framework of Islamic philosophy that differs from Western philosophy in some aspects. In this article I am going to simplify his argument and propound it in the framework of Western philosophy.

The "Seddiqin Argument" which is offered by Mulla Sadra is the result of the development of previous philosophical views in the history of Islamic philosophy. Since the "Seddiqin Argument" has no useful result without studying its metaphysical

foundations, the study of its philosophical foundations is very important in explanation of the argument. The precision and careful survey in its philosophical foundations has made this argument a strong one in opposition to many of criticisms that had troubled other arguments before and after Mulla Sadra.

2-Seddiqin Argument:

Seddiqin Argument in Mulla Sadra's view has some philosophical foundations that should be known for understanding this argument. These foundations must be explained in detail in some other larger researches with their necessary demonstration. I explain briefly only those foundations that are important for propounding the argument:

1-Existence has a notion in mind and a deepest reality in external world. The deepest reality and the truth of existence is the most apparent, because it is not other than appearance and others have their appearance and reality by it. But, the essence of reality of existence is in the extremity of hiddenness. Since its deepest reality is external, so it can not be grasped by mind. In this argument the truth and reality of existence is considered, not its notion, which differs from its reality.

2-When we study some evidence of reality like the existence of "the earth", the existence of the "tree", the existence of the "whiteness" and so on, we realize that we have many conceptions of things like conceptions of "tree", "the earth", "I", "whiteness" and so on, and each of them differs from the others. But, in spite of their differences they have one similarity and that is "all of them exist and have reality outside mind." So, we know that we have two notions of things, one of them is notions like tree, whiteness, earth, etc., and

the other is the notion of existence or reality that is connected to all of those notions. We named the first one, that is thing-ness, "quiddity" (what?-of-definition), and the second one "existence".

There is only existence (its truth not its concept) in external world. Our mind by observing the limitations of existence and its boundaries with non-existence[1] makes some concepts of things that are different from each other which are quiddities. Therefore, fundamentally real is existence and quiddity is mentally posited that if exists it will have existence figuratively. This meaning is named “Fundamental reality of existence” or “principality of existence”.

The main character of Sadra's philosophy is "fundamental reality of existence" and its results, which affects deeply on other parts of his philosophy. This viewpoint brought about different solution for many philosophical problems[2]. Distinguishing between the "notion" of existence and its deepest reality is the main subject of his metaphysics. Because, according to his view, confusion between "concept" and "reality" of existence and their specifications will cause basic mistakes. It will be shown that many problems that caused difficulties for others - both Western and Islamic philosophy - arose from this confusion. Therefore, it is emphasized that reader should have accuracy in this subject; and must study carefully that which specification belong to the "notion of existence" and which other belong to the "reality of existence".

3-The reality of existence is one in all beings. The reality of existence in different beings is not different truth, but all of them refer to one truth. Simultaneously, there are multiple beings that have multiplicity just in this truth i.e. the reality of existence. Since there is nothing in reality other than the truth of existence, so the unifying factor is as same as the

distinguishing factor that both are just existence. Reality of existence is "one" at the same time that is "many". It has unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity. So, differences of existence are due to intensity and weakness or perfection and imperfection or priority and posteriority. In fact, intensity and weakness are only about degrees of one truth in which unifying factor is the same as distinguishing factor. This view is called "analogical gradation". Therefore, the existence has analogical gradation in reality.

4-The relation of “existence giving cause” and its caused (like you and your imaginary apple that you bring it into existence in your mind) in the light of fundamental reality of existence: the cause is what gives existence to the caused. It is not only a mental ascription but is a real relation between cause and caused externally. However it does not mean that there are three things (cause, caused and what that cause gives to caused) and two action (giving by cause and taking by caused). The caused is not other than what cause brings into existence and it is just the act of giving, nay, the act of bringing into existence. Therefore, the caused is just what is given by cause and what takes existence from cause and the act of giving and taking. It is our mind that considers causality in several aspects and compares it with other things, then makes several notions in it. In fact, there is nothing in reality but existence of cause and dependent existence of caused. The caused is a dependent being. It does not mean that it is a being that have dependency like an accident, but it is not other than dependency and need to cause. It is just a need, so that its relation to its cause is an illuminative which has only one side, not a categorical relation that is based on two sides. In the light of analogical gradation of existence, the caused is a weaker degree of existence than its cause which gives existence to it continually. The cause has some perfection that the caused does not have, because its essential need makes it posterior to its cause. The dependent identity of existence of caused that is not but need posits it in a

situation that is in boundary of existence and non- existence. As soon as this relation is eliminated, it will be in the well of non-existence, nay it is not any thing to be non-existence. Consequently, being caused produces a kind of limitation that makes caused tangent to non-existence. The quiddity of caused is what is resulted from these limitations by the mind.

Based the above mentioned foundations two different interpretations have been derived from Mulla Sadra's statements about his Seddiqin Argument.

A: Mesbah Yazdi (1931-) has posed the continuation of Argument as follow[3]:

A.1-The criterion of need of caused to cause is just the dependency and copulation of its existence due to cause namely the weakness of its existence. As long as there is any weakness in a being, it will be necessarily caused and will need essentially a more complete being without any independence on a cause.

A.2- Different degrees of existence, with the exception of the highest degree that has infinite completeness and absolute needlessness and independence, are just dependency and relation. If that highest degree was not a real existence and did not have truth then the other degrees would not exist at all; because if it is supposed that they exist without existence of highest degree, it will imply that those degrees will be independent to it and will not have any need to it; while their existential character is just copulation and dependency and need.

B: M. Motahhary (1921-1981) in another interpretation of the Argument has explained the rest of the argument as follow[4] :

B.1-The truth and reality of existence does not accept non-existence. An existent being in so far as it is an existent being will not ever be non-existence. Likewise non-existence[5] in so far as it is non-existence will not ever be existence. The truth of becoming non-existence in existent beings is limitation of especial existences. It does not mean that existence accept non-existence which is its contradiction. Non-existence is not a real thing, we comprehend the meaning of non-existence by comparing one degree of existence or its limitations with another degree and its limitations. So, it is a relative matter.

B.2-The truth of existence without any respect, relation and dependency that may limit and condition it, is equal to perfection, absoluteness, rich, intensity, actuality, unlimited-ness and glory. But, all of deficiency, weakness, conditionality, poverty, possibility, limitation and determination are not from essence of existence but from non-existences that are the result of being caused. A being, in so far as it is a limited existence and joint to non-existence, qualified by these qualifications. All of these arise from non-existence. The pure truth of existence is opposite to non-existence. What are the circumstances of non-existence is out of pure truth of existence and is negated from it.

B.3-The pure truth of existence exists, because it is just being existent and non-existence is absurd for it. The truth of existence in its essence i.e. in being existent and in its reality is not conditioned by any condition and is not stipulated by any stipulate. Pure existence exists because it is existence not by any other criterion or not by supposition of existence of any other thing. Pure existence in its essence is not conditioned by any condition. On the

other hand, completeness, glory, intensity, richness, actuality, being unlimited and independence arise from existence and they have no reality but existence. Therefore, truth of existence in its essence is equal to unconditionality in relation to any other thing i.e. eternally essential necessity. It is, also, equal to completeness and independence and etc. Consequently, the truth of existence in its essence without any external determination that is joined to it is equal to eternal existence of God. So, the fundamental reality of existence guides us directly to God not to any other thing. This does not result that "God exists", but the result is "truth of existence in essence is not but God". Others than God that are nothing except His acts, effects and manifestations, must be found by other reasons.

Motahhary's view can be clarified by an example. Although this example in some respects clarify the argument, but it is not similar to our subject in all respects.

If we suppose that there is only a luminous source that shines by itself (it must be added that to be luminous in essence does not require unity of this source), then, there will be a light in the world, but all the lights that we can see does not come directly from the source. There are many other things that have light so they can be seen, but all of these lights that come from different things are dependent lights that are the result of reflection and absorption of light of the source. Since everything has some characteristics like special shape and quality, so its light will be limited in shining and color. Some of these things reflect the light directly from the source, some others reflect this first reflection i.e. they reflect the light of source indirectly. Every lighted thing itself can be a source for other things and makes them bright. When sun shines, some things get light from it directly and shine - like earth and external parts of buildings-. Some other things get their light from these things and can be the cause of brightness of others, and so on until there may be a very weak light in the most inner side of a house (for example). So, some things have light

directly from the source, some others indirectly with one, two, three or more intermediaries. It is evident that every thing like B that has its light from other thing like A as its cause, has a weaker degree of light than the light of its cause. If its cause is combined of three colors, the caused can not be combined of other colors. The color of caused only can be equal or less than its cause and certainly a weaker intensity than its cause. Since something has light in a caused manner so this light must be limited and weaker. The limitation and weakness is essentially for a caused light and indicate to being caused of a light. However, the source that has light as such has no limitation in its shining. In physics every source of light shines spherically in all directions without any differences. The demonstration of spherical shining is a philosophical one by this statement that no direction has advantage over others so that makes shining in one direction stronger than another. If it does not shine in one direction there must be an external obstacle. If its shining is not spherical, there must be some reason for it; but spherical shining does not need any reason. The essence of source of light is equal to unconditionality in this respect.

Therefore, there are two types of lights. The first type is light in itself and from itself, and the second is light by something else (that is dependent light). The latter is really the light of source and is a representation of the light of the source that is limited in other things.

Now, it can be questioned why a certain thing is a special degree of light with a kind of limitation, but there is no way to ask why the source that is light in itself not by something else has light. It is unconditional light without any limitation in essence. Every one - even blind people - that only know and believe that there is light in external world recognize the two kinds of light: first one, light-by-something-else and second one, light by essence. It is also evident for him that light by essence has light, nay, it is light and others have lights and appearance by it. What is disputable is why a certain light is a weaker grade of light and is limited by darkness. The answer is in the fact that it is light not in itself but by

something else and this light is a caused one. Dependency or being caused is the essence of this light; every light that can be supposed as a caused light will be caused.

The light is similar to existence in some respects, with the difference that there is nothing other than existence externally. There is no limiting factor other than existence, while in the example of light there are many things with their special properties that cause some limitations for light. There are some other differences like that the existence in itself requires unity while the light does not.

What was mentioned above was interpretation of Sadra's philosophy from the point of view of two commentators with some more explanation and example. He himself stated the argument in his famous book "*al-hikmat al-muta aliyah fi l-asfar al-aqliyyat al-arba ah* " (the Transcendental Wisdom Concerning the Four Intellectual Journeys of the Soul) which is called briefly "Asfar"[6]. You can find the translation of his statements in appendix of this article.

3-The Development of Seddiqin Argument:

The Seddiqin Argument was defined as an argument that proves the existence of God and His attributes by a meditation in the truth of existence. Since this kind of argumentation has more advantages than other kinds of reasoning, so some philosophers had tried to recite it in other ways. Mehdi Ashtiani in his book *"Ta'liqah Ala Sharh al-Manzumah fi al-Hikmat"* enumerated nineteen recitals of Seddiqin Argument which has been posed by several philosophers.[7] However, this argument obtained a new and bright manifestation by Mulla Sadra. After him, two philosophers developed his Seddiqin argument and posed it in a new form. Here, we only explain one of the last recitals that are posed by Tabatabaii

(1902-1981) after some explanations about another version of this argument that is posed by Sabzavari (1797-1828).

3-1-About Sabzevari's Seddiqin Argument:

Sabzavari has a commentary on Sadra's famous book, "Asfar". He posed his argument in his commentary on Sadra's explanation of Seddiqin Argument.[8] He said that all of the foundations that are used by Mulla Sadra for his Seddiqin Argument are not necessary for proving the existence of God. Although, he continued, they are useful for the result of this argument viz. for proving the attributes of God and explaining the kind of relation between God and creatures, but these are not necessary in the beginning. These foundations also make the way of proving the existence of God difficult and need very precision to be understood. As it was explained, Seddiqin Argument in Sadra's philosophy is based on some foundations like (1) fundamental reality of existence, (2) analogical gradation of existence and (3) simplicity of existence; then the argument is explained by a meditation on the truth of existence. Sabzavari posed his argument by using only the first foundation of Sadra's argument i.e. the fundamental reality of existence.

3-2- Seddiqin Argument in Tabatabaii's Viewpoint

Sabzavari's argument made Seddiqin Argument shorter than what had been offered by Mulla Sadra, because there was no need to analogical gradation of existence and its simplicity. The only foundation for Sabzavari's argument was affirmation of fundamental reality of existence.

However, Tabatabaii made the argument shorter than what had been said by Sabzavari. In Tabatabaii's argument, there is no need to any philosophical foundation even that of fundamental reality of existence. His argument can be posed as a first subject in

philosophy. He posed his argument in his notes on Sadra's explanation of Seddiqin Argument in Asfar[9]. Tabatabaii's argument can be explained as follow:

Before discussing about external reality (that it is existence or quiddity), the reality is accepted. This argument begins with the truth of reality. First of all, it is inescapable for every intellectual to accept reality. Reality cannot be proved, because it is essentially evident. Tabatabaii did not assert that reality is just what we conceive, but he argues that everybody believes that there is something real externally, whatsoever it is, regardless to its specifications or numeral characteristics. If we try to prove the truth of reality we have confessed previously that there are a speaker, a listener, an argument and a relation between premises and result. All of these are realities that are supposed in advance. Therefore, the fundamental reality - in general - is evident and cannot be proved.

This truth of reality can not decline and does not accept any kind of disappearing; and rejects essentially annulment. Because, if this reality in every condition or stipulation or time or state declines, then there must be really a time or state or condition that this reality has declined in that situation. So, we must accept some other realities by rejection of reality. Even if we do not state those conditions and say that this reality may decline and become non-reality, we also affirm the reality, because if it declines really and truly then there is a reality and its declination is a reality; and if it does not decline really and we imagine that it declines then the truth of reality will remain and will not disappear. Therefore, it is not possible that the truth of reality declines or accepts nihility even in supposition. Everything that supposition of its declination requires its existence, its nihility must be essentially absurd. If its nihility is absurd then its existence and truth must be essentially necessary. This essential necessity is a philosophical one (not a logical one), and is just eternal necessity. Therefore, there is an essential necessary being which is real in eternal necessity. In studying every being, we understand that neither one of them nor all

of them are the truth of reality, because they can be supposed as non-existence while it is not possible to suppose absolute reality in this argument as non-real. Those are not the absolute reality but they have reality by that truth of reality. (The reality may not also be the matter of the universe, because it is possible to suppose it as non-real in a special situation. The truth of reality is what is reality even in case of supposing all other beings as non-existence). All beings that have reality need it essentially for their reality. They need it to be real and their reality or existences depend on it.

Tabatabaii continued that it became obvious for who concentrate on this argument that the existence of essential necessary being is necessary in human belief and arguments that prove his existence are, in fact, attentions and notes.

Like Sabzavari's argument, in this argument the difficulty is not in proving the existence of God but is in perceiving the truth of reality which is called God. It is difficult to separate "reality" from "what has reality". However, Tabatabaii identifies the reality of existence as God (not God as reality of existence). His argument needs a precise meditation not about his proof but about what he intends by the reality of existence that is different from those which have it and are not just it.

4-The Differences between Ontological Argument and the Seddiqin Argument

The Seddiqin Argument seems, firstly, to be an argument like an ontological one and perhaps as another kind of this argument; but, in spite of some similarities, it differs from ontological argument. Although in the Seddiqin Argument it has been tried, also, to have no reliance on incomplete, weak, poor facts in the world for proving the existence of most complete being and to make the argument for proving His existence more evident than

other beings that are His acts, but it differs from ontological argument in the argumentation in the following ways:

1-The argument, in the ontological argument, begins with the meaning of existence, then the meaning of necessary existence that all are some conceptions in the mind, then the endeavors continue to make this meaning real out of the mind by some reasons, but in the Seddiqin Argument, the argument begins with the reality of existence, not its notion, and continues by surveying in this reality. In other words, the pyramid of existence in ontological argument is built in the mind then the head of this pyramid - the necessary existence- comes out of the mind and is projected into the reality, while in the Seddiqin Argument this pyramid is a building in the reality that stands on its head which is also real. I think the survey in the reality of existence, not in its notion, and the accuracy in the distinction between notion and reality of existence have vaccinated this argument against most of those criticisms that have made some troubles for ontological arguments.

2- The problem in the ontological argument is a problem of judgment, while in the Seddiqin Argument the problem, in some extent, is a problem of presentation and perception. In all kinds of ontological argument that have been proposed in the view of Anselm, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hartshorn, Malkolm and Plantinga, the conception and meaning of God or the Necessary Being is assumed by a definition, then the argument begins to prove His existence and gives a judgment for its listener about reality of this meaning. But, in the Seddiqin Argument it has been tried to provide a good presentation of God by some philosophical surveys in reality of existence that is important for having a good perception from what is intended from God. If some one can have this presentation (that may need

some intuitional knowledge), then the judgment about its reality will be clear and evident without any difficulty to prove it. Therefore, the problem is to give a correct and suitable conception of God that is possible through fundamental reality of existence and its analogical gradation and copulative and independent existences and existential poverty in caused beings and so on. After these presentational surveys there is no problem in having a judgment about its existence that had been clear through previous presentations. That is why some Moslem philosophers believe that[10] "The problem of proving the existence of God is in the level of its presentation, not in the level of its judgment. In other words, the difficult matter is that the mind can have a correct presentation of that conception, when it can reach this purpose its judgment will be easy. But, in other types of knowledge the presentation of their meanings and conceptions is easy and the difficulty is in the judgment and affirmation.

Perhaps it can be said that in the ontological arguments the proposition that must be proved is: "God or necessary existence exists", but in the Seddiqin Argument the proposition that must be affirmed or proved is: "The pure existence or reality is God and others are His representations." It means that there may be a conversion in the proposition, and the subject and the predicate have changed their places.

3- The purpose of those scholars who posed Seddiqin Arguments was not only presenting an argument for proving the existence of God but also to give a suitable view of the relation between Him and His creatures. This relation is not a "categorical one" that stands on two sides like the relation between subject and predicate which are two different things, but it is an "illuminative relation" that stands on one side and the other side is not but this relation. According to ontological and cosmological arguments, God is a necessary existence that must exist necessarily and other existent beings are contingent existences

that their existences depend on that necessary existence. In this view there are two kinds of being: one of which depends on the other; this is a categorical relation. But, In the Seddiqin Argument this relation is an illuminative one.

In this view the relation between God and other beings is like a thing and its shadow, or like a man and his picture, one is real and the other is relation to that real[11]. In other words, other beings are representations of God. He is the real existence and the others show Him before showing themselves.

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[1]. We use the words 'boundaries with non-existence' in this argument but we do not intend that this term means as a real thing in a way that non-existence is a thing and the boundaries is as a line between two things i.e. existence and non-existence. This meaning is quite rejected, because there is not anything but existence; and non-existence has (!) no reality because it is non-existence. We use boundaries of existence and non-existence figuratively, while there is only existence with some limitations that can be grasped by comparing one existent being with another one.

[2] . Some of these philosophical problems that had a new solution by Mulla Sadra are as follow:

a: The unity of the intellect and intellectual and what what is intellected, that is important in the subject of "knowledge".

b: The contingency and necessity

c: The substantial movement

d: The causality that is in the existence of beings and the relation between cause and caused

e: The matter and the form and their unity

f: The individuality

g: The mental existence

h: The grades of existence

i: The copulative existence

j: Duality of mind and body

[3] . Mesbahi Yazdi *Amoozeshi Falsafeh II* pp.342.

[4] See footnotes of M. Motahhari in *Osoole Falsafeh wa Raveshe Realism IV* (The Principles of Philosophy and Methode of Realism) pp. 117-124

[5] . See note No. 1

[6] . Mulla Sadra *Asfar VI* pp.13,14,15

[7] . Mehdi Ashtiani "Ta'liqah Ala Sharh al-Manzumah fi al-Hikmat" pp.488-497

[8] See footnotes of pages 16 and 17 of *AsfarVI* which is written by Sabzavari.

[9] See footnotes of pages 14 and 15 of *AsfarVI* which is written by Tabatabaii

[10] . See for example the introduction which is written by M. Motahhary on Tabatabaii's book, *Osoole Falsafeh wa Ravishi Realism V* p.34

[11] . See footnotes of M. Motahhary on *Osoole Falsafeh wa Ravishi Realism V* p.69